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The Jewish Pogroms in Ukraine

**Authoritative Statements on the Question of
Responsibility for Recent Outbreaks
Against the Jews in Ukraine**

BY

**JULIAN BATCHINSKY
DR. ARNOLD MARGOLIN
DR. MARK VISHNITZER
ISRAEL ZANGWILL**

**Documents, Official Orders, and other Data bearing upon
the facts as they exist today**

**COMPILED AND ISSUED BY THE FRIENDS OF UKRAINE
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FOREWORD

The following data has been compiled and issued by the Friends of Ukraine in the hope and belief that it will serve to set right before the American people any misunderstanding that may exist in this country concerning the true position of the Jewish inhabitants of the territory of the Ukrainian People's Republic; and to convince them that the Government of that Republic is earnestly working with every means in its power to insure to its Jewish population the same civil and political rights and the same full measure of protection to life, liberty, and property that it guarantees to all law-abiding citizens.

A dispassionate reading of the facts as herein presented, including the testimony of several among the world's most prominent Jewish leaders, is invited in the belief that it can not fail to convince all fair-minded Americans that the Ukrainian People's Republic is founded upon these principles of Justice and Equality that inevitably shall result in a "Government of the People, by the People, for the People."

The Jewish Pogroms in Ukraine and the Ukrainian People's Republic

By

JULIAN BATCHINSKY

the Ukrainian Diplomatic Representative to the United States

(A Letter to the Editors of American Newspapers, published in October and November, 1919, by the New York Globe, the Philadelphia Public Ledger, Brooklyn Eagle, St. Louis Jewish Voice, New Orleans Jewish Ledger, N. Y. Hebrew Standard, Jewish Monitor of Fort Worth, Texas, Jewish Advocate of Boston, Mass., N. Y. Evening Post, and others.)

DEAR SIR:—

Will you grant me an opportunity to say what I know and what I feel about the Jewish pogroms in Ukraine?

While all the distressing particulars of the tragedy and the number of mournful casualties are still to be ascertained, let us still hope that they have been smaller than reported in days of peril and anguish. The facts can not and must not be denied or justified or excused. However, they should be more clearly understood by every Jew and by every Ukrainian, by the American democracy, and by the world at large. In the name of humanity and for the future of Ukraine we should take a common stand, Jews and Ukrainians, that responsibility be fixed and punishment be brought to the guilty; that the wrongs committed there be righted, and that Ukraine be made a safe home for all its citizens, Jews and Gentiles alike.

A Republic "By and For People of All Creeds and Races."

I would be derelict to the duty laid upon me by my government and to the principles upon which it is acting and fight-

ing if I should express any other opinion. Neither can I keep silent. The Ukrainian People's Republic is intended by the people and for the people of all creeds and races of Ukraine. Though guiltless, we owe it to a due regard for our own rights as a nation that we do not hide ourselves behind the excuse that we are not our brother's keeper.

So sincerely do we believe in these things that I speak the mind and the wish of my government when I say that it is its earnest desire and purpose that full justice be done to the Jewish people in Ukraine in their time of distress and dismay. The government of the Ukrainian People's Republic is anxious that an international investigation, careful and detailed, without any political consideration and without favor or disfavor to any one, should look into every crime committed on the bloodstained soil of Ukraine and establish the responsibility of the criminals.

Ready to Accept any Inquiry by America and American Jews.

It is ready to accept any inquiry that may be made by America and by American Jews. It insists that the Ukrainian People's Republic, its aims as well as its ways and means, and the Ukrainian national movement in general be included and submitted to a most scrupulous examination.

I beg only the privilege that the heading of the indictment, "Pogroms in Ukraine," may not by itself and not in advance imply a ready judgment upon the Ukrainian People's Republic and its government. They are protecting the land and the people of Ukraine against things that they can not control or alter, namely, the action of others.

Since the very revival of Ukrainian national aspirations 150 years ago, Ukraine's struggle for freedom has remained uninfected by any jingoistic greed, nationalistic ambitions or racial prejudices. Until the late decade there was no such thing as a reactionary party in Ukrainian politics, because any form of allegiance to our nationality and even the very name of Ukraine were considered as evidence of disloyalty and treason against czarist Russia. When the growing strength of

the Ukrainian national movement had begun to convert some of the reactionary elements, its main aims and objects were already safeguarded under revolutionary control.

No Quarrel with the Jews for Several Generations.

I want you to realize that for several generations past we have had no quarrel with the Jewish people. Of course, a handful of Jewish bourgeoisie lent themselves to support the Russian domination in Ukraine and the Polish rule in Ukrainian Galicia against the people and the democracy of their countries. For generations no evidence can be traced out, either on Ukrainian nor on Jewish side, of any antagonism between Ukrainian national aspirations and the Jewish people, Jewish nationality and Jewish life in our country. There has been no reason for any antagonistic tendencies.

And yet, a sinister spirit of pogroms rules throughout Ukraine. It was the spirit of czarist Russia. The administration, the bureaucracy, and the police of the empire, school, church, and yellow press were instrumental in setting the population of Ukraine against the Jews. It is a matter of common knowledge that Jews were persecuted and outraged and slain to avert growing dissatisfaction of the workingman, and the pauperized peasant, and to justify further repression of liberal elements. Many a Ukrainian pauper and many a Ukrainian scamp received their murderous weapons and their ignominious orders from the criminals much higher up. Ukrainian democracy, muzzled and strangled, was so deprived of any influence on what was happening, under the czar's rule, as the unfortunate victims themselves.

Bonds of Common Interest Between Races in Galicia.

In Eastern Galicia, where, in spite of oppression and persecution, the Ukrainian democracy has succeeded in controlling the feelings of the people, no outburst of racial hatred has ever been recorded, the proximity of Russia, Poland and Roumania and the anti-Semitic efforts of the Polish administration notwithstanding. Moreover, during the last years the Ukrain-

ians and the Jews in Galicia have been drawn closely together by bonds of common interest and of mutual understanding.

After the breakdown of the Russian empire, the Ukrainian People's Republic has been established on the territory of Ukraine, and at the very inception of this republic the first Ukrainian Parliament (Central Rada) has abolished all racial restrictions enforced by the Russian government, and has proclaimed the principle of self-determination and of full liberty of self-development for all racial groups, carrying out these principles in practice.

Being one of the principal racial minority, the Jews in Ukraine have had granted by law a full autonomy and have had secured by the Ukrainian government all moral and material means that are necessary for the development of their nationality and for the advancement of their national culture. Jewish representatives have been invited and admitted to a real participation in government and to leadership in determining the destinies of the country. Our friendship was accepted without reservation, and I can say with a good deal of confidence that there was no Jewish faction in our country which did not admit that the Ukrainian People's Republic meant the realization of the best hopes and rights of the Jewish people in Ukraine.

Looking Forward in Hope to Days of Reconstruction.

I have no disposition to boast of what my government has accomplished—in 1917. It has merely done its duty. We have always believed—and we still hope—that in days of reconstruction the Jewish population of Ukraine will be of infinite service to the country. As a matter of course, they will become conscious of their moral partnership only when they experience the fullest freedom of their independent growth.

We have waited many months for these days of readjustment and recuperation to come, and they have not come. It is very hard to say in quiet phrases what has happened in Ukraine since the revolution. War and disorder, devastation

and confusion, became the lot of the distracted country. The Ukrainian People's Republic has had to defend its very existence against German invasion, against Russian Bolshevist conquest, against Poland's noble legions, against Denikin's Cossack raids, and the dark forces behind them, against internal strife, against marauding bandit gangs, against an economic ruin, against a complete breakdown and disaster.

For the Jew, this disaster resulted in pogroms.

Fairness in Judgment as to Who are the Guilty

Who are the guilty ones? Who has to bear the ghastly responsibility?

The errand I am bound on to America, comprises no obligation to lie either for my country or for my countrymen. Before we condemn anybody we have to sit in judgment upon ourselves. I must admit that information now in my possession fully establishes the fact that in one case—a very severe one (Proskurow)—soldiers from the Ukrainian People's Army were the perpetrators. It was not upon the impulse of the government, nor upon a military command that they slew helpless people. It was not with knowledge of Simon Petlura, but against his strictest orders and against the purpose of the Ukrainian People's Republic.

There is some evidence of old-fashioned provocation or of criminal mistake or wilful disobedience on the part of the local commander in several other, fortunately less disastrous, cases. Just these cases, wherever the name of Ukrainian People's Republic or of Simon Petlura is involved, we want to be investigated first of all.

But, allow me to say, these are rather exceptional cases.

Spirit of Czarist Russia Kept Alive by Dark Forces.

The spirit of czarist Russia is being kept very much alive, not only through the efforts of Denikin, his backers, but by the dark forces hidden throughout all the territory of the former Russian Empire, by the rank and file of the old Black

Hundreds, by many others. It is the Russia of infamous memory against which the Ukrainian People's Republic is fighting for deliverance.

It is also known that pogroms have been carried out in Ukrainian territory occupied by Russian Bolshevik armies. Jews have been robbed and driven from their homes and slain by Bolshevik marauders and by Soviet troops themselves, which are characterized by a great variety of discipline and of purpose.

In Western Ukraine—Galicia and a part of Volhynia—Jews, as well as Ukrainians themselves, have been persecuted and outraged and starved out by invading Polish legions.

Finally, large parts of Ukrainian territory seem to be a No Man's Land, where various bandit gangs are preying upon the people. They comprise adventurers and brigands mostly, of—I am sorry to admit—Ukrainian language and descent, the same as lynching mobs in America consist of Americans.

Little of Disturbed Area Controlled by Ukrainian Government

The bloody tide swept within its wave almost all the territory of Ukraine. Only a small part of this territory was controlled by the Ukrainian People's Republic. The pogroms in Ukraine took place during the winter and spring months. Even in December the Ukrainian government lost the control of Eastern Ukraine, and the Ukrainian army fought its retreat battles against advancing Bolshevik armies. Since February the territory controlled by the Ukrainian government has grown still smaller, including only parts of Podolia and Volhynia, and by the end of winter the main body of the Ukrainian army had been forced to pass over the Galician border. Speaking of pogroms, may I not insert that marauding soldier bands who tried to continue their work in Ukrainian Galicia have been put down and executed by the Ukrainian peasants themselves.

The reconquest of Ukraine was begun in the summer, but still the Ukrainian People's Republic is in power only in Podolia, Volhynia, and in the government of Kiev, as far as the

city of Kiev and the district of Uman. In this territory, I think I can say with confidence, the dangers are now passed and overcome.

The government of the Ukrainian People's Republic is willing to redress all wrongs committed against the Jews in Ukraine, even when these wrongs have been committed by its worst enemies, but it must decline any moral responsibility for innocent blood, to prevent the shedding of which it has done its utmost.

The Ukrainian Government not Criminally Negligent.

But the question arises: Has not the Ukrainian government been criminally negligent? It has not. The directorate—the present Republican government which has overthrown the Hetman regime—immediately after having assumed the power, re-enacted the national autonomy law, and called upon the population of Ukraine to regard the Jews as friends and as allies of Ukrainian democracy. Proclamation after proclamation against pogroms and order after order against evildoers have been issued. Millions of rubles in damages have been paid and hundreds of murderers and provocators have been executed. There has been no Ukrainian government without Jewish secretaries being in it. Many of them are well known Jewish labor leaders; all of them are true Jews in whose word the Jewish world can have the utmost confidence.

I deeply regret to say the government did not succeed even in exterminating all outlaw gangs. Some day it will be shown how they made their narrow escapes. Many a cutthroat found refuge by hissing the flag of Bolshevism or the image of Saint Russia. I instance only the most notorious cases of Machno and Grigoriev. Machno's bands were surrounded by the punitive forces of the Ukrainian government early in winter, after they made their first appearance in and around Katerinoslav, but they were rescued by the rapidly progressing Bolshevik advance. After having supported the Bolsheviks, Machno joined Denikin and left Denikin to es-

tablish himself again independently. While changing his allegiance, he never stopped harassing Jews.

The unspeakable Grigoriev revolted against the Ukrainian government which tried to check his pogrom activities and went over to the Bolsheviks and was appointed Bolshevik commander in south Ukraine. Then he betrayed the Bolsheviks and is now traitorously gathering the reactionary forces around him, the very same forces that had driven the Ukrainian people to revolution.

Strongest Possible Government Under the Circumstances.

The government of the Ukrainian People's Republic is not powerful enough. But there is no government anywhere and there has never been a government which would prove stronger in these circumstances.

The Ukrainian People's Republic was set up thirty months ago. The Directorate—the present government of the Ukrainian People's Republic—assumed the control eleven months ago.

They are expected to organize and to reconstruct a country which has been disorganized and exhausted and corrupted by more than a century of czarist misrule. They are expected to assert the principles of right and humanity and to safeguard peace and security in spite of continuous war, and revolution within and without. They are expected to do this while assaulted by three powers, each of them superior in arms, money, diplomacy, and propaganda. They are expected to do it while they have to bar the invading Bolshevik Russia. They are expected to do it while they are facing the eastward march of Polish imperialism to the west and the counter-revolutionary Russia to the east, both of them being supported and supplied with all the resources of western Europe. They are expected to do it without any support from anywhere, with a peasant army in rags, with only a strong will to protect their country for their weapon.

Reliance in Final Victory for the People of Ukraine.

It will be done. We rely on the people of Ukraine and on the final victory of justice and democracy, no matter how many times and by whom they were betrayed. But it could not be done right away.

After you read the charges contained in documents which are being issued in Warsaw or in Rostov or in Moscow—use your own judgment. Ukraine is practically isolated from the rest of the world. The governments fighting the Ukrainian People's Republic disseminate the most foul charges against those they are trying to destroy. Recently in correspondence emanating from Rostov, and from Paris, the war between Denikin's Russian army and the Ukrainian People's army has been represented as "a struggle for and against Israel." Denikin is protecting the Jews and this is why Petlura, who is relentlessly against them, has declared war against Denikin. I ask you to supply your hard business sense: can you think that these are differences between the Czarist generals and the Ukrainian People's Republic, of which government four Jews are a trusted part and a Jew is assistant secretary of war? Is this the issue?

I know that on this side of the water, we have to face a very great deal of misjudgment with regard to our national aims and principles.

Jewish Inquiry Invited in Name of Government.

In the name of the Ukrainian government, Simon Petlura, president of the Ukrainian People's Republic, issued a special message inviting the representatives of the Jews outside of Ukraine to investigate the pogroms and the attitude which the Ukrainian government has been taking and is taking toward the Jews. This message has been delivered to the Jewish committee in London.

Acting upon instruction from my government, I extend this invitation to the American Jews. Their representative organizations are requested—through their representative men, men of their choice and confidence—to look into the

THE NEW MAP OF EUROPE

APPROXIMATE BOUNDARIES OF PEOPLES

BY
HERBERT ADOLPHUS MILLER
1918

SLAYS IN STRAIGHT LINES—

LATINS—

FORMER EMPIRE OF AUSTRIA-HUNGARY

UKRAINE

AREA: 330,000 square
miles.

POPULATION:
45,000,000.

FORM OF GOVERN-
MENT: Republic.

ESTABLISHED: 1917.

CAPITAL CITY: Kiev.





sufferings of their brethren and sisters, to ascertain the causes and the consequences, to establish the responsibility and to take any steps it might be necessary to take to prevent future violence.

American Jews Particularly are Asked to Investigate.

In particular, the responsible organizations of American Jews are requested to investigate: whether the Ukrainian People's Republic is organized to brigandage and revolt against everybody and everything, or whether it has been founded to obtain independence of a long oppressed country, and whether the Ukrainian People's Republic is spreading racial hatred and intolerance, or whether it stands for equality, freedom and free development of nationalities and undictated autonomous self-development of any race or nationality in Ukraine; whether the Ukrainian People's Republic is warring upon the Jews, or whether the Jewish representatives are a responsible part of its government and Jewish men are fighting side by side with their Ukrainian fellow-citizens for Ukraine and for the common cause of all her people; whether the Ukrainian People's Republic is guilty of crimes committed against the Jewish population, or whether it has spent every energy to keep the Jews in Ukraine out of danger, to punish the criminals, and to heal the wounds of the sufferers.

Widespread Unprejudiced Consideration is Sought.

It is earnestly hoped that the results of this inquiry may receive wide-spread unprejudiced consideration.

I am speaking for the Ukrainian Government when I say that the investigation will meet with its support and approval, and I think that I can say with as much confidence that the investigators will find that all measures have been taken by the government to safeguard Jewish lives and interests and to secure to Jewish citizens of Ukraine the full enjoyment of their acknowledged rights. The Ukrainian People's Republic will live up to the hopes of so many of the best and truest Jews in Ukraine who put their trust in her.

Soldiers of the Ukrainian People's Republic Ordered to Respect and Protect the Jews

*Daily order by the Supreme Commander to the
troops of the Ukrainian People's Republic*

No. 131.

August 26, 1919.

This order will be read in the divisions, the brigades, the regiments, the battalions and the companies of the armies of the Dnieper and of the Dniester and in the detachments of the insurgents:

* * * The sinister men of the "Black Hundred" and the "Red Hundred" are but one band. They are assiduously weaving the spider's web, provoking pogroms of the Jewish population, and on many occasions they have incited certain backward elements of our army to commit abominable acts. They thus succeeded in defiling our struggle for liberty in the eyes of the world and compromise our national cause.

Officers and Cossacks! It is time to know that the Jews have, like the greater part of our Ukrainian population suffered from the horrors of the Bolshevik-communist invasion and follow the way to the truth. The best Jewish groups such as the "Bund", the "Unified", the "Poaley-Zion" and the "Folks Party" have willingly placed themselves at the disposal of the sovereign and independent Ukraine and cooperate with us.

It is time to learn that the peaceful Jewish population, its women and children have been oppressed in the same way as ours and deprived of national liberty. This population has lived with us for centuries and divides our pleasures and our sorrows.

The chivalrous troops who bring fraternity, equality, and liberty to all the nationalities of Ukraine, must not listen to the invaders and provocators who hunger for human blood. Neither can they remain indifferent in the

face of the tragic fate of the Jews. He who becomes an accomplice to such crimes is a traitor and an enemy of our country, and he must be placed beyond the pale of human society.

Officers and Cossacks! The entire world is amazed at your heroism. Do not tarnish it, even accidentally by an infamous adventure and do not dishonor our Republic in the eyes of the world. Our enemies have exploited the pogroms against us. They affirm that we are not worthy of an independent and sovereign existence and that we must be enslaved once again.

Officers and Cossacks! Ensure the victory by directing your arms against the real enemy, and remember that our pure cause, necessitates clean hands. I expressly order you to drive away with your arms all who incite you to pogroms and bring them before the courts as enemies of the State. And the tribunal will judge them for their acts and the most severe penalties of the law will be inflicted on all those found guilty.

The Government of the Ukrainian People's Republic has addressed an appeal to all inhabitants of the country to resist the activities of our enemies who provoke the pogroms of the Jewish population.

I order all troops to listen well and to retain this appeal and to spread it as much as possible among their comrades and among the people.

PETLURA.
Commander in Chief.

The Jews in the Ukraine

Interview appearing in the "Jewish Chronicle,"
of London, England, granted by,

DR. ARNOLD MARGOLIN,

Representative of the Ukraine at the Paris Peace Conference.

Dr. Arnold Margolin in explaining the position taken by the Jews towards the formation of the new state, said:

"At the time of the proclamation of Ukrainian independence, the Jews were divided into two camps. On the one side were the Jewish assimilators, who had been brought up in an All-Russian political atmosphere, and who adopted a negative attitude towards the formation of the Ukrainian State. This party, which numerically was not important, was supported by a number of Jewish refugees from old Russia. On the other side were ranged the National Jews, the Zionists, Itoists, and Jewish Socialist parties, who took up a favourable attitude. Those Jews who had national aspirations of their own could not but view with favour similar strivings on the part of a people which had hitherto lived in a position of tutelage. The principles laid down by President Wilson as to the rights of small nations were bound to be applied to the Ukrainian people. So far as the social programme of the State was concerned, the Jews were also divided into two camps. One group, which was not very numerous, went hand in hand with the advanced parties of the Left, which aimed at the exclusion of the bourgeoisie from State affairs. To this group belonged the left wing of the Bund and the Poalei-Zion. The other group took up the standpoint of those Ukrainian parties who supported the principles of a general franchise and who sought to apply to the Ukraine the political system which obtains in Western Europe. They eschewed Utopian experiments and Maximalist aspirations. Although there were these differences in regard to the social and economic conditions involved in the creation of the Ukrainian State, nearly all Jewish parties and organizations were united on the question of the right of the Ukrainian people to determine their ultimate political destiny on popular lines."

Jewish Autonomy

What was the attitude of the Ukrainian authorities towards the Jews? our representative asked.

“In the Ukraine, including Galicia, there are three and one-half million Jews, as compared with nearly forty millions of the general population. The Jews thus form nearly eight per cent of the total inhabitants. On the initiation of the new regime, a Central Representative Parliament was formed, composed of all parties in the country, including the Jews. About seventy per cent of the seats on this body were held by Ukrainians proper, the remainder being allocated to representatives of the Jews, the Poles, and Russians. This Parliamentary body showed its willingness to grant more concessions to Jews than had any other constituent assembly in history. It conceded autonomy to all minorities in the State, and three Ministers were appointed for the affairs of these minorities, including the Jews. A noteworthy act of the parliament was to appoint a Court of Cassation, those judges being selected who had had the courage to oppose the Russian Government in the Beilis trial. In April, 1918, I was almost unanimously selected as a member of this Court.”

Dr. Margolin further describes the changes which took place when the original Ukrainian Government was overthrown, and superseded by the Government of Hetman Skoropadsky:

“At the end of April the Hetman Government came into power, and the Central Parliament was abolished. The autonomy of minorities was also withdrawn, but no serious inroads were made on the political rights of the Jews. The Court of Cassation was not disturbed, and the members were given the title of Senator. A Jew, M. Gutnik, of Odessa, was appointed Minister of Commerce. The Hetman regime lasted eight months, and when it was overthrown by Petlura, the new Government restored the autonomy of minorities and again appointed Jewish Ministers. M. Goldelmann, a member of the Poalei-Zion, received an Under-Secretaryship, and I was appointed Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs. I retained my seat on the Court of Cassation, though I did not act in my judicial capacity while I held a portfolio. Jews were also included in the various diplomatic mis-

sions dispatched by the Ukraine Government to foreign countries. Thus, Dr. Vishnitzer, the well known historian, and one of the editors of the Jewish encyclopedia published in Russia, is one of the secretaries of the English mission. Jews are included in the press and secretarial sections of the French mission, and a Jew is one of the secretaries of the Dutch mission."

The Pogroms

How do you reconcile the outbreak of pogroms with this favourable attitude towards the Jews?

"There is this difference between the pogroms which have unhappily taken place in the Ukraine and those which occurred under the Tsarist regime. Whereas the latter were instigated and connived at by the authorities, the Ukraine Government has steadfastly set its face against the pogroms, and it has had no part in, or responsibility for them. At the time of Petlura's coup d'etat at the end of November, 1918, I myself read, in numerous towns and villages in the Ukraine, proclamations issued by the Government strongly condemning pogroms, explaining to the people that the Jews were fellow-citizens and brothers who were helping in the evolution of the Ukrainian State, and to whom the fullest rights were due. The proclamations declared that pogroms must tend to discredit the Ukraine in the eyes of the civilized world, and those who took part in them were no friends of their country.

"Unfortunately, after the Bolsheviks took Kieff, and disintegration set in among the ranks of the Ukrainian forces, the worst element of the army started pogroms. Once more the Government disavowed them, sentenced the perpetrators to death, expressed their deepest sympathy with the Jews and promised the fullest compensation to the sufferers. I must unhappily admit that the last pogroms as to which I have information—those of February and March last—were very bad, thousands of Jews being killed. They were instigated by criminals, Black Hundreds, and Bolsheviks, who wished to discredit the Ukrainian Government. These events made a deep impression upon me, and at the end of March I tendered my resignation. I stated that I was aware that the Government were not to blame for the pogroms, but that, as a Jew, I felt that I could not retain an official position in a country where my brethren were being massacred. My

resignation was not accepted, and the Government begged me to continue to give my services at least abroad, and I was appointed as one of a mission of four to represent the Ukraine at the Peace Conference, my colleagues being the former Ministers, M. M. Sidorenko, Paneiko, and Shulgin. The prevalence of pogroms in the Ukraine may be partly attributed to the fact that the Ukrainians, although constituting a distinct political entity, were subject for 250 years to Russia, and have acquired, as an evil inheritance, what I may call the pogrom habit. It is at least a matter for satisfaction that there is no anti-Semitic tendency in the Ukraine Government, which differs in this respect, very notably, from that prevailing in Poland. It is to the progress of democratic ideals in the Ukraine that we must look for the elimination of the evil pogrom element."

Justice and Polity Demand Fair Treatment of the Jews

by

DR. MARK VISHNITZER

Jewish Historian and Editor of the "Jewish Encyclopedia"
and the "History of the Jewish People."

After Ukraine had shaken off the centennial chains of foreign sovereignty and was proclaimed as a free State, it was thought in leading Ukrainian circles that autonomic, national rights should be given to the nationalities that have, since ancient times, been domiciled in Ukraine. Thereby peace would be secured among the different nationalities in the new State, and the co-operation of all the different tribes of people would be gained for the building up of the Ukrainian republic.

The scope of this decision can be appreciated when we remember what the Ukrainian people have suffered in the course of time from national suppression. But it was also wise, farseeing and beneficial to the State to win over the minorities to the cause of the new State, for those minorities—Russians, Jews and Poles—have always been, and are still, in numbers, reputation, cultural development and economical consideration, important factors in the country.

Guarantees of the Ukrainian Parliament

In order to safeguard the national interests of the aforesaid nationalities, special State-Secretary offices were established. In the first so-called "Universal," or proclamation to the people, "Central Rada" (the Ukrainian Parliament) promised to protect the national rights of the minority nationalities. In the third "Universal" the "Rada" went still further and granted national personal autonomy to the Russian, Jewish, Polish and other minority nationalities, and held out prospects of a special law in this respect being made. Thus the Jewish question, which has been worrying most European countries, was solved in a clear and natural way.

Proved by Experience of Latter Years

The experiences of latter years have proved to us that it does not pay to have a civil emancipation of the Jewish inhabitants. We realize more and more that the civil emancipation can not be the final solution of the Jewish question, and that the recognition of all people as equally entitled members of a State is the consequence of the recognition of all nations as equally entitled factors in the progress of humanity. Thus this demand which the Jewish civil and socialistic parties present with more and more force is for the first time recognized as authorized and is fulfilled in Ukraine.

The law proposed by the government has been elaborated by the Secretary of State for Jewish Affairs, and on January 9, 1918, it was unanimously passed by the Central Rada. In this law it was solemnly declared that all people in Ukraine have a right to national-personal autonomy, *i. e.*, a right of independent determination of their national life, especially by means of national leagues composed of members of the respective nationality. The right to national-personal autonomy is an inviolable right. This right can not be denied any people in the Ukrainian republic, and neither can it be restricted for those who enjoy it. The national league has a right to impose taxes on its members and to take all steps that it finds necessary to protect all cultural and other demands.

Jewish Life Able to Develop Freely

Owing to the political conditions the law has not yet taken effect, but during the two years the independent Ukrainian State has existed public Jewish life has been able to develop freely. The Jews in Ukraine have the most extended national rights. The Jewish language is officially recognized, a Jewish ministry has been able to develop its activity. Jewish congregations have been able to thrive in freedom, and new Jewish schools have grown up. In the newly founded university at Kamenetz Podolsk, the government has established a professor's chair for Jewish history and literature, and hereby the national rights of the Jewish people have been still more emphasized.

Jewish Aspirations Peaceably Attained

The Government in East Galicia (the West Ukrainian Republic) has, in every case, shown much understanding with respect to the demands of the Jewish inhabitants for autonomy. The Jews have here, as in Great Ukraine, without fighting and without any special exertions, attained what they have striven after and are still striving after in other countries, for instances in Poland and Roumania. It was, at least lately, necessary at the peace conference to fight some of the Poles. The arrangement with the Poles contains a whole series of provisions with respect to political and national rights for Jews, but all these together can not anywhere near equal the regulations of the Jewish question which have been established by the Central Rada in its grand law concerning national-personal autonomy. There is lacking a central Jewish school system; there is even lacking an organ for Jewish autonomic organizations in the country, even the nucleus of national autonomy is lacking.

The Roumanians even refuse to give the Jews the slight admissions granted them by the Poles, but they will probably submit to the pressure exercised by the Allied Powers. No matter how this turns out, the Polish agreement does not contain the provisions that the Jews are striving for. The Jews in Ukraine will lose much if the imperialistic aspirations of the Poles, Russians and Roumanians for Ukrainian land should become a reality.

Israel Zangwill Commends New Republic's Attitude Toward the Jews in Ukraine

(A letter from Israel Zangwill, noted writer and President of the Jewish Territorial Organization, in reply to an invitation by the Ukrainian Government to participate in the commission for the investigation of Jewish pogroms in Ukraine.)

October 20, 1919.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE DELEGATION OF THE UKRAINIAN REPUBLIC

DEAR SIR:—

I feel highly honored at the invitation of the Ukrainian Government to take part in the proposed Commission for the investigation of anti-Jewish pogroms, but I am away in Wales, resting under medical advice, and do not feel the strength to undertake the journey. Moreover, if Doctor Yochelman, a member of the Council of the Jewish Territorial Organization, forms one of the members my organization will be sufficiently represented. I take the opportunity of saying, however, that it needed not this step, nor even your honest admission of the deplorable facts as regards the towns, to convince me that your government is working hard, if not perhaps its hardest, to stop massacres for which the unsettled state of Russia is largely responsible.

The national rights you have given to the Jews are a manifestation of true statesmanship and in shining contrast with the Jewish policy of Poland, and I can only hope that your Republic will be preserved to give the rest of the world an example of the strength and the exalted patriotism that comes from the cordial co-operation and mutual respect of all the varied racial and religious elements that make up a modern State. That these massacres, if they continue, will destroy your State no less surely than its innocent victims, adds to the regret with which I, as a supporter of the principle of self-determination, observe your present failure to suppress them entirely.

Again thanking you for the honor of your invitation,

Sincerely yours,

ISRAEL ZANGWILL.

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